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TAGS: PGOV KDEM KPKO CG ELECTIONS

SUBJECT: DRC ELECTIONS: KABILA LEADING BEMBA IN EASTERN  
VOTING DISTRICTS

Classified By: PolOff CBrown, reasons 1.4 b/d.

¶1. (SBU) With just five percent of all electoral districts nationwide having reported their ballot counts, incumbent President Joseph Kabila has taken a large and early lead over Vice President Jean-Pierre Bemba. Six of the eight districts reporting, however, are in eastern DRC, where Kabila was expected to win by a wide margin. As of August 8, according to internal figures from the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI), eight of the 169 voting districts have finished counting presidential ballots and have officially posted their results. According to vote counts provided by CEI officials, Kabila is leading Bemba in these areas by a nearly six-to-one margin. The CEI figures show that in these eight districts, Kabila garnered 395,672 votes to Bemba's 71,617.

¶2. (U) The CEI results report Kabila won overwhelmingly in the districts of Kindu (Maniema province), Kolwezi ville, Mutshatsha and Kalemie (Katanga province), and the city of Beni (North Kivu province). Bemba meanwhile defeated Kabila by wide margins in the Bas-Congo districts of Boma and Songololo. In the Bas-Congo district of Moanda, however, Oscar Kashala trumped both Kabila and Bemba by more than 7,000 votes.

¶3. (SBU) Voter participation rates in the eight reporting districts show an average 75 percent voter turnout rate. The highest reported participation level was in Kolwezi (86.92 percent), while the lowest was in Moanda (65.87). While the overall participation rate is thus far higher than that achieved during the December constitutional referendum (64 percent), the number is expected to decrease slightly as more results become known from areas where turnout was likely lower, such as the Kasais.

¶4. (U) The CEI is currently compiling results from the 49,746 nationwide polling sites at 62 regional centers across the country. According to internal CEI figures, 49 percent of all voting stations have as of August 8 sent their ballots and tally sheets to these centers. CEI regulations, however, prohibit the compilation centers from publishing results by district until the material from all polling centers in a particular district have been accounted for and verified. CEI President Abbe Apollinaire Malu Malu said August 8 that election workers are now conducting the counting and compilation phase much faster than when such operations began a week ago. Malu Malu said he remained confident the CEI would still be able to announce provisional nationwide results for the presidential race no later than August 20.

¶5. (C) Comment: While these initial (though reliable) results show Kabila in a commanding lead over Bemba, they only

represent five percent of the total, and will not reflect nationwide results. Bemba is expected to do well in much of western DRC, including Kinshasa, and other candidates will also pick up votes, for example Antoine Gizenga who is likely to have done well in the province of Bandundu. As more districts in the western and central regions of the country finalize their compilations, Kabila's lead will surely narrow. At this stage, however, it is still unclear whether there will be a second-round run-off. End comment.

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